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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 110

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/483)

The President: Today we turn to a subject of great importance to us all and a matter of high priority for me as President of the General Assembly.

The issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly has been on the agenda of the Assembly since its forty-sixth session, in 1991. Over the past 15 years, the Assembly has raised its profile and taken on more work on a range of issues. At the same time, the Assembly has also devoted a fair amount of time to improving its efficiency and working methods.

At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. We can be proud of what we have achieved over the years, and we should remain resolved to do our utmost to respond to the needs of the peoples of the world. Since the World Summit, the General Assembly has been engaged in a very intense period of reform.

At its sixtieth and sixty-first sessions, the General Assembly agreed on various measures to strengthen the Organization. The most recent step was taken on 20 November, when the Assembly adopted by consensus the resolution on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

In adopting these reforms, the General Assembly has demonstrated that it is prepared to take difficult decisions to better equip the United Nations to address the global issues facing us today. We also have a responsibility to monitor the implementation of our reforms. In particular, we should ensure that the newly established institutions, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, live up to their full potential.

At the World Summit, our leaders also reaffirmed the role of the Assembly in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. There are many examples of major international legal instruments that have been adopted by the General Assembly: from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted by this Assembly this morning.

As we go forward in our efforts to further revitalize the General Assembly, we should build on previous initiatives and improvements in the work of the General Assembly. During the past three sessions, a number of substantive resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly outlining measures to enhance the role and the authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

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Special attention has been given to streamlining the agenda of the Assembly and improving the working methods of the Main Committees. Here, I would like to express my appreciation to all the Chairpersons of the Main Committees at this session for their efforts in that regard.

The revitalization resolutions have also addressed the issue of strengthening the role and leadership of the President of the General Assembly. As a result of the reform agenda, new demands have been placed on the presidency in the past two years. Any strengthened role for the President of the General Assembly will require a reinforced Office of the President and enhanced support by Secretariat staff.

As President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Secretariat for all the support provided and to the Governments which have seconded staff to my Office. However, it has been my experience that the General Assembly, as an institution, is sometimes given unfair treatment, even within our Organization. I will make every effort to enhance the role of the Assembly, in particular regarding current issues of importance to Member States.

We need to focus more on enhancing the impact of our work on the everyday lives of the people of the world. We must strive to be on the forefront of the global agenda so that we can play a role in shaping it, not just reacting to it. We must become more focused and action-oriented in our work. And we need to enhance the visibility of our work by strengthening our efforts to tackle strategic issues, reach out to broader audiences and communicate our views.

In all aspects of our work, we need to build on our relationships with external partners, including national and regional parliaments, civil society and the private sector. One way to strengthen our relationships with other relevant actors is through interactive thematic debates, as called for in the most recent resolutions on General Assembly revitalization. As I have already informed the Assembly, it has been my intention to arrange three thematic debates during the current session. The first one was held on 27 November on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. I intend to organize two more thematic debates next spring, one on gender and development, and the other on dialogue among civilizations. I will inform the Assembly regarding the timing and arrangements for these meetings.

In resolution 60/286, the President of the General Assembly was invited to convene consultations among Member States to decide on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, open to all Member States. I intend to conduct consultations early next year on how to proceed on this important matter. I will ask for Members' views on the preferred format for taking the issue forward and on the substance we should focus our efforts on during this session.

I look forward to hearing members' views and proposals on this important subject during our deliberations today.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on agenda item 110, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The Non-Aligned Movement considers that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a key component in the overall reform of the United Nations, and its objectives should continue to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly as the principal deliberative, policymaking, standards-setting and representative organ of the United Nations.

The Non-Aligned Movement will not support any approach that seeks to undermine or that could result in undermining or minimizing the Assembly's achievements, diminishing its current role and functioning or raising questions about its relevance and credibility. The Movement calls upon all Member States to renew their commitment and political will to implement General Assembly resolutions and decisions on a non-selective and non-discriminatory basis, keeping in mind that the failure of these commitments and political will is at the root of many unresolved questions.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms the role and authority of the General Assembly, including on questions relating to international peace and security, as stipulated in Articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations, and, where appropriate, using the procedures set forth in rules 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. These rules make it possible for the Assembly to take urgent action, bearing in mind that the Security Council has

primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

In this regard, the Movement supports the adoption of measures aimed at simplifying the procedure of the General Assembly's "Uniting for peace" resolution (377 [V] A), so as to facilitate the adoption of urgent and expeditious measures by the General Assembly. It further reiterates the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security and expresses its grave concern about instances where the Security Council fails to fulfil its primary responsibility in that regard.

The Non-Aligned Movement wishes to emphasize that in such cases where the Security Council has not fulfilled its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the General Assembly should take appropriate measures, in accordance with the Charter, to address this issue.

In this regard, and in accordance with the mandate given by the heads of State or Government during the fourteenth summit of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana, we are working on an appropriate draft resolution on this subject to be submitted to the General Assembly. Therefore, the Non-Aligned Movement formally requests that this agenda item be kept open so that we can submit the draft to all Member States for their consideration at a later date.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that close cooperation and coordination among all United Nations principal organs in accordance with their respective functions and powers is essential so that the United Nations can continue to be relevant and capable of facing existing threats and challenges as well as new or incipient ones. In that context, the Movement reiterates its concern about attempts to move agenda items of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council to the Security Council and it opposes the Security Council's usurpation of the functions and powers of the Assembly and other principal organs.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to meet periodically, in order to debate and coordinate among themselves the questions relative to the agenda and the working programmes of their respective organs, so as to achieve greater coherence and complementarity among them, and mutually strengthen one another while respecting the mandates of each.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement welcome the informal thematic debate held last 27 November on the role of partnerships in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the need for taking stock so as to make progress, as well as the President's intention to hold thematic debates on the questions of gender and development and dialogue among civilizations.

In paragraph 4 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 60/286, the Security Council was invited to further its initiatives to improve the quality of its annual report to the General Assembly as set forth in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, in order to provide the Assembly with a substantive and analytical report. Unfortunately, the Security Council has submitted, once again this year, a report that does not fulfil Member States' expectations, a report that is basically limited to a chronology of events and which lacks analyses and assessments.

Furthermore, the Council is still failing to submit special reports for review by the General Assembly in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter. The Non-Aligned Movement recommends that the General Assembly consider the possibility of proposing parameters for the preparation of monthly Security Council assessments so as to ensure that they are comprehensive and analytical, in contrast to current practice. We would also like to know whether the presidency of the General Assembly intends to propose any concrete measures for consultations that will make it possible for us to continue to review the Council's report, as provided for in paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 60/286.

With regard to other issues relating to the role and the authority of the Assembly, we would like to know whether the current presidency received from its predecessor a report on best practices and lessons learned during its tenure, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the annex to resolution 60/286. Furthermore, we believe that now is the time to carry out an assessment of the impact of the decisions adopted by the Assembly concerning the strengthening of the President's Office as part of the effort to reaffirm the Assembly's authority, with a view to learning whether the objectives of those decisions have been achieved.

The Non-Aligned Movement would like to stress the central role played by the General Assembly in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, and we express our support for efforts to strengthen the Assembly's role in that regard. We would like in particular to express our satisfaction at the fact that the Non-Aligned Movement's support for regional rotation and its view that the next Secretary-General should be chosen from among the Asian States Members of the United Nations led to a satisfactory outcome. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his appointment, and we reaffirm our support for him. We would also like to express our appreciation for the work carried out by Mr. Kofi Annan, and we wish him well in his future work.

However, with regard to the selection process of the Secretary-General, we would like to express our disappointment about the fact that paragraph 19 of the annex to resolution 60/286 has not received due consideration during this session, despite the fact that a clear majority believed that informal meetings among the candidates and the various groups represented progress towards a more inclusive and transparent process. The failure to properly implement the provisions of resolution 60/286 leaves the negative impression that the restrictive interpretation of Article 97 of the Charter has prevailed once again in the process of selecting the Secretary-General.

Regarding working methods, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to know about the status of implementation of the requests made of the Secretary-General in paragraphs 24, 29 and 30 of resolution 60/286. Lastly, the Movement requests the presidency of the Assembly to begin a consultation process among Member States with a view to reaching a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly that is open to all Member States, with a view to identifying ways to enhance the role and the authority of the Assembly.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): It is my privilege to speak today on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand in this debate on agenda item 110, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". Our delegations believe that this item should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of the overarching project of United Nations reform. As the Secretary-General-designate, Ban Ki-moon, has commented, the true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise, but how much we deliver for those who need us most. Our delegations consider that statement to be applicable right across the United Nations agenda, including reform in the area of General Assembly revitalization.

In aiming for deliverables, we do recognize that revitalization — a subject we discuss every year, both here in the Assembly and in the Ad Hoc Working Group — is much more a process than a specific outcome. But equipped with the draft resolution before us, and those we have adopted previously, we will be in a good position to move the process forward.

As an aid to delivery, the delegation of Canada, Australia and New Zealand welcome the request that the Secretary-General submit a status report to the General Assembly during the sixty-first session on the implementation of all resolutions regarding the revitalization of its work. This report may add to the background note already prepared by the Secretariat in response to a request from the Ad Hoc Working Group for information on the state of implementation of previous resolutions on revitalization.

Our delegations were encouraged by the Secretariat's note, which revealed that many past recommendations for revitalization have, in fact, been implemented, while others remain under active consideration. Periodic meetings among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and the holding of topical thematic debates during the Assembly's main session, for example, are both initiatives that are revitalizing this body's fulfilment of its Charter role. Our delegations also welcomed the enhanced transparency and timeliness of the 2006 process for selecting the new Secretary-General, and supported the cooperative efforts of the General Assembly and the Security Council in determining their respective roles in the improved process.

We were disappointed however, that many recommendations have yet to be taken up or implemented consistently. We have many times noted the advantages that might accompany a shorter Assembly agenda, including the opportunity for full discussion of all issues so that decisions might have the greatest possible relevance and impact. Yet the current session of the Assembly has an agenda of over 150 items, seriously limiting the ability of even the largest delegations to commit adequate resources and attention to each issue. For smaller delegations it demands a

ruthless prioritization of items and risks marginalizing their engagement throughout the United Nations.

We must make progress on reviewing the mandates of the General Assembly, with a view to eliminating some items and consolidating others, in order to ensure that the membership is fully seized of and able to fully engage in the many important issues before us.

So, too, have we agreed that resolutions should be shorter, simpler, sharper and directed to action, with preambular paragraphs normally kept to a minimum. Yet all too often we settle for merely updating resolutions with technical changes that have no resonance and no impact. Our record on recommending actions to revitalize the General Assembly is strong. What needs work is implementing them.

Like many others, our delegations are committed to improving our engagement in the resolution process and our implementation of previously agreed recommendations. This commitment is ongoing, and we acknowledge that achieving lasting change is in the hands of all Member States.

Our delegations continue to see a need for Member States and the Secretariat to better monitor the follow-up of General Assembly resolutions. This reflects the recognition during the mandate review process that members need improved information and structured processes in order to become better custodians of their resolutions. We are all responsible for this revitalization; we all have an interest in implementing its recommendations.

Revitalizing the General Assembly would have a system-wide impact. As the most representative United Nations body, the Assembly is mandated to discuss all matters within the scope of the United Nations Charter. It makes important decisions on issues ranging from disarmament, human rights and international law to development and specific economic, political and humanitarian situations. It is also responsible for many of the decisions authorizing and implementing United Nations reform. With a streamlined agenda focused on members' core priorities, a practice of adopting concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions, and a balanced working relationship with other parts of the United Nations system, a revitalized General Assembly can better fulfil both its Charter obligations and its members' expectations.

In common with the rest of the United Nations reform process, General Assembly revitalization needs to deliver results to be credible. The draft resolution before us today invites the President of the General Assembly to resume the work of the ad hoc Working Group. Our delegations are willing to fully engage in that group next year, but we hope that it will be more productive in focusing on practical, realistic and deliverable steps to revitalize our Assembly.

Mr. Malhotra (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/61/483), which provides a useful background for our consideration today of the issue of revitalization of the General Assembly. The position of the Non-Aligned Movement on this topic has been expressed by Cuba, and it has my delegation's full support.

The report of the Secretary-General details the many steps implemented over the last few years to streamline the work and agenda of the General Assembly. There has been considerable focus on improving the working methods of the General Assembly and of its Main Committees. Efforts have also been made to rationalize and streamline the agenda of the General Assembly so as to give a sharper focus to its work. Additional staff has been provided to the Office of the President of the General Assembly, as also during the period of transition between an outgoing and incoming President. The Secretariat has endeavoured to reduce the heavy burden of documentation submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. Looking at all this, one might even reach the erroneous conclusion that a great deal had been achieved.

A useful beginning has certainly been made through the revitalization exercise undertaken so far, via implementation of many of the provisions of resolutions already adopted on this subject. However, in a dynamic and changing world, we need regularly to review measures that can improve our work efficiency. At the same time, such measures by themselves do not automatically lead to empowerment of the General Assembly. The streamlining of procedures and working methods is only a means to an end; it is not the end itself.

Having come this far in our quest to revitalize the General Assembly, we must now focus on the more substantive aspects of its revitalization. Such reform must necessarily be an ongoing process that is part of a

continuum; it cannot be limited to any current or just-completed process in a particular session of the General Assembly; it has to be part of a larger, ongoing process of United Nations reform that will need to be furthered in the months and years ahead.

A revitalized General Assembly cannot be achieved via better coordination alone. It must focus on setting the global agenda, especially on development issues. Revitalization of the Assembly should ensure that that body addresses the development problems confronting the overwhelming majority of Member States. The General Assembly must also restore the centrality of the United Nations in economic matters. An increase in the weight and a stronger voice on the part of developing countries in the global economic architecture would exercise a positive influence on the Bretton Woods institutions and enhance the acceptability of their decisions.

One substantive area that resolution 60/286 attempted to revitalize is the role of the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General. Efforts to put in place a more inclusive and transparent procedure for the appointment of the Secretary-General, consistent with Article 97 of the Charter, need not be undertaken only when a selection process is on the horizon or under way. There is a need to address this important issue on a continuing basis.

Another topic that has figured in resolutions on General Assembly revitalization, and on which a number of countries have expressed concern during previous discussions, is that of balance between the principal organs of the United Nations. The encroachment by the Security Council on issues that traditionally fall within the Assembly's competence, such as the process of standard-setting and codification of international law and the holding of thematic debates, among others, are of particular concern. The consequent undermining of the role and authority of the General Assembly needs to be redressed if that body is to be revitalized.

The resort to thematic debates in the Security Council on issues that very often fall within the purview of the General Assembly or of the Economic and Social Council remains an area of concern to many delegations. The balance between the principal organs of the United Nations as ordained by the Charter must be respected and maintained. The encroachment by the Security Council on issues that clearly fall within the functions and powers of the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies is also contrary to our collective decision to strengthen and revitalize the General Assembly.

Resolution 60/286 reiterated that, in addition to the Security Council making its annual report more analytical, it should also submit special reports to the General Assembly. The most recent annual report of the Security Council remained deficient in terms of analytical content, while no special report has been submitted. In any case, the Security Council must continue to consider ways to further improve the quality of its reports to the General Assembly.

Operative paragraph 3 (a) of resolution 59/313 requests the President of the General Assembly to propose interactive debates on current issues on the agenda of the Assembly, in consultation with Member States. We appreciate the initiative taken by you, Madam, as President of the General Assembly, in recently organizing such an interactive debate. The views of the Member States in deciding the themes for such periodic thematic discussions are important in order to ensure that the issues taken up are indeed of current global relevance. It would also be useful to avoid duplication of discussions held recently in other forums, for instance, in the Economic and Social Council or in its functional Commissions. Prior consultation on themes for interactive debates can be expected to lead to wider, more effective and enthusiastic participation in them.

In attempting to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, there is also a need to bear in mind the core competence of the General Assembly itself. The General Assembly occupies the central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. However, it is not expected to function as an executive or judicial arm. As its presiding officer, the President must be able to enhance its performance in the interests of the broad membership of the General Assembly. In this era of cross-cutting concerns, we must also guard against an overzealous approach leading to the General Assembly intruding into areas that are essentially the core competence of other bodies in the United Nations system even as we avoid a surrender of its remit to others.

Resolution 60/286, adopted by the General Assembly on this subject at its previous session,

invited you, Madam, as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, to convene consultations among Member States to decide on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on this issue that would be open to all Member States. We would urge that such consultations be undertaken without delay so as to enable continued consideration by Member States of the important issue of revitalization of the General Assembly, with a view to identifying ways to enhance its role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Madam, on the way in which you are conducting this debate, which is of particular importance to Member States. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

My delegation expresses its support for the statement on this topic made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and wishes to make the following observations.

First, with regard to strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly, in the September 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), our heads of State and Government reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. The work already done to give effect to that description, particularly within the framework of the Ad Hoc Working Group, is certainly commendable.

My delegation believes that further strengthening of the role and the authority of the General Assembly requires, inter alia, the inclusion on its agenda of issues of crucial importance for the Organization and the international community. It also requires the holding of major thematic debates so that Member States can reach agreement on substantive and timely issues. In that regard, Madam President, we are very pleased at the thematic debate that you convened on 27 November and at your intention to organize two more next year.

We also believe that strengthening the General Assembly requires recognition of its role with regard to international peace and security. Indeed, while it is generally agreed that Article 24 of the Charter confers on the Security Council primary responsibility in this area, that responsibility is not exclusive. Thus, the General Assembly should focus further on issues relating to international peace and security, in accordance with the relevant articles of the Charter.

In another area, the question of the relations between the General Assembly and the other principal United Nations organs should continue to be the subject of in-depth consideration. Such consideration should be carried out here in the plenary and in the context of an approach based on cooperation and maintaining balance, as well as respect for the roles that the Charter confers on each of those organs. The establishment of a de facto legislative competence of the Security Council in areas that, under the Charter's provisions, come within the competence of the General Assembly is a phenomenon that deserves to be discussed.

In the same spirit, while we appreciate the existing cooperation between the presidency of the Economic and Social Council and that of the General Assembly, we believe that further coordination between those two organs would be useful, particularly when it comes to the choice of thematic debates, which must respect the old and new mandates of the Economic and Social Council.

Here, I should like to return to the issue of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. Universal respect for the resolutions adopted by the Assembly would help to strengthen its authority. My delegation supports the call for the identification of factors hindering the implementation of resolutions so that they can be considered in the context of a follow-up mechanism.

Concerning the issue of the General Assembly's relations with civil society, my delegation welcomes the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other non-State actors in strengthening the role of the Assembly. While we support the efforts to further involve NGOs in the Organization's activities, my delegation also believes that that must be in accordance with the existing rules.

Secondly, with regard to improving the General Assembly's working methods, we are pleased that several measures in that area have been implemented, particularly the holding of interactive debates, round tables and question-and-answer sessions within the Main Committees over the past few years. Those practices have made it possible to enhance the

deliberations and the decision-making process of the Main Committees.

My delegation supports the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, calling on Member States to, inter alia, elaborate more concise, focused and specific resolutions and decisions, reduce as much as possible the number of preambular paragraphs in resolutions and ensure that Member States associating themselves with a statement already made by the Chair of a group of States focus their statements on points that were not sufficiently developed in that group's statement. My delegation believes, however, that all of that must in no way affect the sovereign right of Member States in that regard.

On another note, we believe that several of the measures proposed in the context of the debates on improving the Assembly's working methods, which have not yet been the subject of decisions, should be reconsidered. That is the case, for example, with the proposal that the work of the General Assembly's Main Committees be organized into two substantive periods per session and that the best working practices of the Main Committees — which, we should recall, differ from one another — be better harmonized.

Here, we should also return to the issue of the voting process within the General Assembly. Once again, we ask the Secretariat to accelerate the completion of the study requested by Member States regarding the use of optical scanners to expedite the counting of votes in secret ballots.

Finally, with regard to the role of the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General, my delegation welcomes the debate held last spring on that issue in the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group. The General Assembly must be able to resume its consideration of that question in due course and in a calm atmosphere.

In conclusion, I wish to express to you, Madam President, my delegation's support for the mandate given to you by resolution 59/313 to hold consultations among Member States aimed at establishing an ad hoc working group, open to all, to study ways to strengthen the role, authority and effectiveness of the General Assembly. In that context, we believe that revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a long-term process that must be continued with determination and seriousness, but without haste.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

Pakistan shares the growing concern of the United Nations general membership that over the past two decades, the role and effectiveness of the General Assembly as envisaged in the Charter have been progressively and significantly eroded.

At recent sessions, the General Assembly adopted resolutions — 57/300, 58/126, 59/313 and 60/286 — which sought to inject vitality into its work and outcomes. The 2000 Summit also reaffirmed the central position of the Assembly. Efforts were continued during the sixtieth session to promote the Summit's decision. Pakistan urges the full implementation of the previous General Assembly resolutions on revitalization.

Pakistan has consistently held that the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly is a political, not a procedural, issue. Certainly, we should further rationalize the Assembly's agenda, amalgamating similar items and eliminating redundant issues. We should seek to streamline resolutions, making them shorter and more action-oriented. We should be better organized in plenary meetings of the Assembly and its Main Committees so as to save money and time, conduct more focused discussions and adopt more specific decisions.

The reports sought from the Secretariat could also be improved and, in certain instances, consolidated and streamlined. Repetitive and overlapping mandates could be avoided. Indeed, considerable improvements have been made already and further improvements can be made, including through the review of mandates initiated during this year in the General Assembly's informal consultations of the plenary.

Yet the real revitalization of the Assembly will happen only once the general membership displays the political will and determination to enable the Assembly to discharge its prescribed role and responsibility as envisaged in the Charter, and only once the erosion of that role and authority — principally by the Security Council and, to a certain extent, by the Secretariat — is halted and reversed. Under the Charter, the General Assembly's role is broad and far-reaching. It is the principal deliberative and policymaking — and the most representative — organ of the United Nations. It is the principal forum where the policies of States are

to be harmonized and the purposes and principles of the Charter promoted and realized.

The General Assembly's role covers political, security, economic, social, human rights and humanitarian issues, norm-setting and treaty-making, as well as the financial and administrative management of the Organization and its Secretariat. The Assembly's political role is manifested in the ability of any Member State to raise any issue of concern to it in the Assembly under an existing or additional agenda item. This is the special value of the United Nations for the majority of the membership. That ability should not be arbitrarily restricted or proscribed in the name of rationalization.

It is particularly vital to ensure the exercise of the Assembly's role in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 35 of the Charter. The encroachment on the role of the Assembly by the Security Council should be reversed. The Council's role in the maintenance of peace and security, as envisaged in the Charter, is mainly reactive, not proactive. We believe that the thematic issues raised in the Security Council should revert to the General Assembly.

The Security Council has assumed a role in two areas: terrorism and non-proliferation. This was in response to extraordinary events. Now that the General Assembly has adopted a comprehensive strategy on terrorism, the main responsibility in this area should revert to the Assembly. The Security Council's committees should be replaced by a standing committee on counter-terrorism under the General Assembly. Similarly, the Assembly should reassert its role in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, replacing the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1540 (2004) with a comparable Assembly committee. Likewise, the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, rather than the Security Council, should be the focus of consideration of humanitarian issues, including those arising from conflict situations.

The Assembly should also exercise closer examination of the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council. We support the submission of special reports by the Security Council. Such a review is especially necessary whenever the Security Council authorizes action under Charter VII and whenever a veto is exercised in the Council. The Assembly also has a vital role in the economic and social fields, both in policy formulation and implementation. The Economic and Social Council — which is to hold annual ministerial reviews and to act as a development cooperation forum — should report to the Assembly. The Assembly should organize a special meeting on development during its annual general debate to allow for a ministerial and leadership review of economic and social policy issues.

We attach special importance to the norm-setting and treaty-making role of the General Assembly. To this end, we would advocate the creation of ad hoc committees to elaborate instruments on various issues identified for new norm-setting by the Assembly or as a result of recommendations of various committees and commissions, such as the Law Commission.

The General Assembly's role in the financial and administrative management of the Organization needs to be strengthened. We will resist all efforts to weaken or marginalize that role, which is currently exercised mainly through the Fifth Committee. In particular, the Assembly should closely scrutinize the decisions of the Security Council which require the allocation of resources for peacekeeping or other purposes.

The Assembly's administrative role should be strengthened by, inter alia, requiring the Secretary-General to consult the Assembly on all high-level appointments, including the appointment of special representatives of the Secretary-General. The Assembly's approval should also be secured for the establishment of high-level panels on various issues and for the selection of their members.

A major reason for the erosion of the Assembly's credibility and effectiveness is the non-implementation of its resolutions and decisions. Implementation can be enhanced by improving the content of the Assembly's resolutions. But there is a pressing need for some form of mechanism capable of monitoring the implementation of such resolutions. We therefore suggest that, for every resolution, the Secretariat be required to submit, within a specific time frame, a report on the status of implementation. This should include information on the reasons for non-implementation or delay in implementation. A special unit could be created within the Secretariat for the follow-up and review of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. Perhaps such a unit could be

located within the Office of the General Assembly President.

Finally, we support all efforts to strengthen the Office of the President of the Assembly. Additional professional and support staff should be provided for the Office. The Office should also be strengthened operationally. The Secretary-General should brief the Assembly President, perhaps every two weeks, on the activities under way in various parts of the United Nations, including in the Security Council. The President should also be authorized to request special briefings on any situation or issue from the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and from the Secretary-General. In turn, the President of the General Assembly should evolve a standing mechanism — perhaps through the General Committee — to keep the general membership of the United Nations fully abreast of developments in various parts of the Organization and its family of organizations.

Pakistan hopes that during this session we will revive the consultative mechanism to consider recommendations for the revival of the General Assembly. Pakistan will work together with other Member States, especially the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, to restore the role envisaged by the Charter for the Assembly.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to express our support for the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

Today, the General Assembly is debating one of the most important items on its agenda. Its importance is derived from the character of the General Assembly's Charter role and authority as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. In addition, since the General Assembly comprises all Member States, it is the pulsing heart of the United Nations. It is responsible for overseeing the delegation of authority and responsibility among the main and subsidiary organs and for supervising the implementation of their mandates. It has even been called upon to carry out such duties in their place, when necessary, or when any of those bodies exceed their authority and actually encroach on the mother-body of the General Assembly, or gravely violate the principles and purposes of the United Nations by not meeting their responsibilities in an effective and timely manner.

Those considerations were behind the importance that heads of State or Government attached in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) to adhering to the purposes and principles of the Charter in the process of United Nations reform. World leaders reaffirmed the importance of the Organization's credibility and of increasing its ability to shoulder its responsibilities. These are increasingly linked to ensuring the Assembly's ability to exercise its institutional authority, even though past resolutions already reflect international approval of a number of important steps in that direction.

However, such resolutions represent only a small proportion of the many crucial reforms that are needed to enhance the capacity of the General Assembly. Some needed reforms are increasingly controversial due to the desire of some main and subsidiary organs of the United Nations system to encroach upon the authority of the General Assembly, in flagrant violation of the principles and purposes on the basis of which the Organization was founded.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and I would like to stress a number of important points. First, the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly is an ongoing process based on ensuring the effective implementation of the relevant Assembly resolutions and negotiating additional steps both to ensure the implementation of what has been agreed on and to build on that with the aim of restoring the viability of the General Assembly.

Those endeavours will not be successful if we limit our action to rationalizing the agenda and mandates of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, or to attempts to reduce the number of meetings or minimize the volume of reports submitted to the Assembly.

We need a clear and objective plan based on an integrated strategy aimed at enhancing the Assembly's ability to exercise its authority despite attempts by other main and subsidiary organs to prevent that. In that perspective, Madam President, we support your approach of undertaking general discussions on important issues such as gender equality, dialogue

among civilizations, development issues and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Secondly, although the process of appointing the eighth Secretary-General of the Organization was successful, with the General Assembly appointing him by consensus following a recommendation by the Security Council, the associated deliberations revealed the need to continue the search for ways and means to increase the role of the General Assembly in the process, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. These could include implementing General Assembly resolutions 51/241 and 60/286, the establishment of a clear mechanism enabling the Assembly to evaluate candidates and submit their names to the Security Council for consideration, and tightened review of the criteria the Council uses in submitting its recommendations to the General Assembly.

In addition, it is necessary to consider restricting the use of the veto in the Council's selection process, to ensure fairness and equality among Council members without undermining the Council's Charter role in recommending candidates and the General Assembly's in appointing one of them.

Thirdly, the Security Council's increasingly frequent attempts to encroach on the authority of the General Assembly should come to an end. There should be full respect for the distinctions made in the Charter regarding the responsibilities and the functions of the principal organs of the United Nations, and, in particular, respect for the General Assembly's prerogative to supervise how the Security Council is meeting its main responsibilities. To that end, the imbalance in institutional relations between these bodies must be repaired, as we discussed in detail on 11 December during the joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111, on the report of the Security Council and on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters, respectively (see A/61/PV.72).

Fourthly, we cannot overemphasize the importance of promoting the General Assembly's ability to address instances where the Security Council has failed to fulfil its responsibility, placed upon it by Member States, to maintain international peace and security. Such failures may occur as a result of the abuse of the veto power, or because the Council is unable to comprehend the nature and implications of important cases that threaten international stability. These failures negatively impact the Council's ability to settle conflicts, thereby increasing their duration and the suffering of the peoples involved.

To express their concern over this critical situation, heads of State or Government of the Non-aligned Movement called upon their permanent representatives to the United Nations, in an official statement published following the Havana summit, to submit a draft resolution that would restore the General Assembly's authority to take necessary action to address dangerous cases affecting international peace and security, in particular those which the Security Council has failed to address because of the abuse of the veto power. These would include cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as ensuring ceasefires between warring parties. As mentioned by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, this draft resolution will soon be submitted to the Assembly, along with another related to the Havana Summit.

Fifthly, in the same context, it is imperative that we pursue the simultaneous revitalization of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and that we ensure that no one used financial obstacles to prevent the Assembly from fulfilling its mandates. In conformity with the principle of "one country one vote", assessed financial contributions based on the ability to pay should not be used as a tool to put pressure on the Secretariat or to undermine mandates. It is worth mentioning, in this context, that balance and confidence between developing and developed States, as well as with the Secretariat, must be restored on a more just footing. Such an approach is imperative if the General Assembly is to meet its obligations without being subject to undue pressure. It is also necessary to enhance the role of the President of the General Assembly, who must supervise a balanced relationship among the principal organs of the United Nations.

In order to achieve the aspirations of the general membership to revitalize the role of the General Assembly, the delegation of Egypt supports the establishment of an open-ended working group to study the proposals of Member States which set forth frameworks derived from previous resolutions on this issue. Such a working group would identify new perspectives on serious and bold proposals on how to promote the authority of the General Assembly to

enable it and its presidency to satisfy the ambitions of the general membership.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/61/483) presenting an overview of the status of implementation of the resolutions regarding the revitalization of our work in the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

The European Union believes that the role and authority of the General Assembly has benefited from the revitalization efforts carried out under the leadership of a number of General Assembly Presidents over the past 15 years. Most recently, last September, the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly completed its work, after six months and several rounds of negotiations. The Assembly then adopted resolution 60/286, containing further decisions aimed to improve the Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to thank the co-Chairpersons of the Working Group, Ambassador Abdullah Alsaidi of Yemen and Ambassador Solveiga Silkalna of Latvia, for their valuable work.

Any reform requires all parties to agree upon, and then to implement, realistic and action-oriented steps to be taken at the practical level. The European Union welcomes the achievements that have been set out to improve the working methods of the General Assembly.

Most of the decisions and recommendations already taken cannot be implemented by the General Assembly as such, or by the Secretariat. The real challenge in implementing these decisions belongs to the Member States. We — every single delegation in this Hall — have to act accordingly and apply in our own performance in the General Assembly what has been found useful and necessary to revitalize this body. For that reason, the EU would like to highlight some of the decisions adopted by Member States.

First, revitalization of the General Assembly is an ongoing process, not just one event or a series of meetings. Therefore, we would like to encourage the Main Committees to review their agendas and working methods on a continuous basis. In particular, the General Assembly and its Main Committees should continue to rationalize and streamline their agendas, including through clustering and the biennialization or triennalization of agenda items, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

The EU welcomes the fact that, as noted in the Secretary General's report, the General Assembly is continuing to make efforts to streamline the agenda of the plenary. In addition, further innovative means should be considered to make our debates more in-depth, focused and interactive in order to make the Organization better serve the international community.

The EU notes with concern that, according to the Secretary-General's report, there has been only limited success in consolidating reports on related subjects. The question of rationalization of reports and their issuance is one area where more progress should be made both to avoid duplication and to allow the work of Member States to be more meaningful.

The EU would like to stress the need to make reports available in all official languages in a timely manner and in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, as agreed in resolution 48/264. This is necessary for all delegations to be able to consider the substance of reports in advance.

Secondly, we have emphasized that the United Nations should be dedicated to preserving its institutional memory. Exchange of experiences between the outgoing and incoming Assembly Presidents and Bureau members of the Main Committees needs to become a regular practice in order to improve our ability to work for a common goal. The EU looks forward to receiving a study of precedents and past practices of the General Assembly being undertaken by the Office of Legal Affairs when it becomes available.

Thirdly, many aspects of modern technology may be useful to facilitate our intergovernmental work. New websites assist delegations in being better informed and also help us to be more open and visible to the

world outside. Greater public visibility through the mass media could make the United Nations more understandable to the world constituency.

Information technology may also be useful in improving monitoring of the implementation of those General Assembly resolutions that are relevant for the advancement of international development goals. The EU also looks forward to the upcoming study on the use of optical scanners which will be presented to the General Assembly later in this session. Optical scanners could be an essential tool for delegations during our very frequent elections.

Coordination and cooperation should guide our work. In that regard, we welcome the regular meetings of the General Assembly President with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In this regard, the EU would like to acknowledge the increased level of transparency in the recent process of selecting the new Secretary-General.

While reaffirming the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, the EU would like to reiterate the decision taken in the context of the revitalization process to invite the Security Council to submit to the General Assembly special subject-oriented reports on issues of current concern, as enshrined in Article 24 of the Charter.

In conclusion, the process of General Assembly revitalization should not be perceived as a separate task. Rather, it should be framed in the broader context of the ongoing United Nations reforms, where issues are interconnected. Furthermore, the EU would like to emphasize that the full involvement of the General Assembly in the process of reforming the Organization is concrete proof of its own revitalization.

The EU is ready to engage in further discussions on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. Mohamed (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the Republic of Yemen and to express my appreciation and thanks for the outstanding way in which you are conducting our important work.

I must also congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483) and its annex relating to the implementation of resolutions on that subject. We wish him every happiness and success in his future life and activities.

We pay tribute to the co-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly for the remarkable efforts they have made and for the smooth functioning of the Group during what was sometimes a difficult period. We also support the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

During past sessions, the Republic of Yemen has followed with great interest the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Reform also continues to be considered in relation to other items on the Assembly's agenda this session. That requires that we engage in further debate and exchange of ideas and that we take decisions not with haste, but with care.

Today, we are considering this issue in view of the General Assembly's central role as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations, which represents all Member States on an equal footing and where political decisions are formulated and debate is carried out in a democratic and transparent manner. That role was strengthened by the holding of the 2005 World Summit and by the Assembly's success during the sixtieth session in implementing resolutions on reform by establishing the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and adopting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The General Assembly must be revitalized in order to consolidate and strengthen its role, authority and mandate under the Charter and thus prevent the Security Council from encroaching on its areas of competence. We believe that the Council is gradually appropriating the competences of the Assembly. That has caused incoherence, disharmony and constant tension between the Assembly and the Council. Thus, the Assembly has sometimes found itself paralysed, unable to carry out its Charter mandates and responsibilities. That is why we urge the Assembly to place the highest priority on revitalizing its work within the framework of comprehensive reform so that such reform can be fully successful. The Assembly will be streamlined and revitalized if we eliminate duplication and repetitive debates in various United Nations organs and if we rationalize its debates and focus our attention on issues of concrete interest to all States, particularly sustainable development.

We are especially concerned by the fact that the work of the Security Council is frequently hindered by the excessive use of the veto, which prevents the Council from carrying out the tasks entrusted to it with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. Therefore, we believe that the General Assembly should play a fundamental role in the maintenance of international peace and security when the Council is unable to do so, particularly since all States without exception are represented in the Assembly with no privileges reserved for a few States.

We welcome the holding of periodic meetings among the Presidents of the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. That is likely to strengthen cooperation among the three organs and to contribute to the full coordination of their work, thus increasing the effectiveness and strengthening the role and the credibility of the Organization as a whole. It is essential that the principal organs cooperate so that their respective mandates supplement one another.

Yemen is aware of the major role played by the General Assembly in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. We support the efforts to consolidate the Assembly's role in that regard. We urge that the process of selecting the Secretary-General be made more transparent and inclusive, through the participation of all Members, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. Strengthening the Office of the President of the Assembly necessarily requires strengthening the Assembly's authority. The presidency cannot carry out its balancing role of providing good offices and mediation unless it is equipped with the efficient logistical and human resources it needs.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): At the outset, I want to thank the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483).

During the past few months, we experienced the excitement of adopting several new reforms and resolutions. However, despite our initial enthusiasm, it seems clear to me that in this Hall and around this building, it is business as usual. Our young and very capable colleagues, who come here from all over the world with the enthusiasm, dreams and ambitions of those who want to change the course of the world's events, often find themselves bogged down in endless meetings focusing not on the substance of the issues but on the legalistic meaning of a few words. It seems as if most of the excitement occurs while they are watching the scoreboard results of a contested draft resolution.

I believe that the first and most important reform needed by the General Assembly is a new and more effective way of doing business among ourselves, among our missions, among our valued associates and between the Member States and the Secretariat. Every time we gather in the General Assembly, we have to make sure that we engage in a frank, open and businesslike exchange so that all of us will be able to make decisions on so many pressing issues on the basis of the collective wisdom in this Hall and to provide ourselves with appropriate implementing instruments.

In this Hall, which is full of capable professionals at the peak of their diplomatic careers, policymaking must be our first priority. Moreover, we need to do much more strategic planning before delegating our powers to the many agencies and bodies of the United Nations. We cannot relinquish the central role of this organ.

The word "revitalization" comes from the Latin and means "to give new life". That is what we need to do in the General Assembly. We need to restore our enthusiasm for the Assembly as well as its credibility, for the benefit of our countries and our future generations.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on revitalization of the General Assembly (A/61/483) as the principal organ for discussing international problems. We wish to express our views in order to contribute to the debate on this important issue.

Honduras believes that revitalization of the General Assembly should be aimed at reaffirming its central role as the chief deliberative organ for the adoption of universal actions and policies for the good of humanity.

A famous Latin American statesman once said, referring to another international organization, that that organization was nothing more than a reflection of what countries wanted it to be. Indeed, that is a basic principle that we should use as a starting point for any analysis related to our actions to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. It is our actions, our

governmental policies, our guiding principles and our daily activities that will form the profile of the Organization that we have or wish to have.

Accordingly, it is important that, in addition to being involved in policymaking, we assume political responsibility for our decisions and define clearly our objectives. We welcomed the progress made and the positive results achieved during the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly. However, major problems remain, and we will have to show greater resolve in addressing them. Thus at every stage we will have to endeavour to make optimum use of the resources available, so as to produce a United Nations that is equipped to confront the ever-greater challenges facing humanity.

We view mandate review as a very important goal. In particular, the rationalization and combining of items, as well as the adoption of coherent policies, would allow for united and comprehensive responses that would surely benefit both our Organization and our peoples, who so often look to us to help them realize their hopes and dreams and resolve their pressing problems.

Mandate review also could rationalize the resources that are currently dispersed throughout the Organization. We therefore deem it necessary to set priorities and to fine-tune our working agendas, in addition to restructuring and reorganizing the Main Committees and enhancing their working methods.

We believe that the process of revitalizing the General Assembly should also aim to restore the rightful balance of power and division of labour between the General Assembly and the Security Council. It might be useful to propose the establishment of a coordination mechanism among the two bodies, so as to enable proper communication in a broad spirit of interdependence and mutual cooperation. Such coordination should also include the Economic and Social Council.

The report of the Secretary-General deals appropriately with the question of the programmes of the work of the Main Committees and suggests their rationalization, as that would make a substantial contribution to alleviating the workload of the General Assembly.

It is appropriate here to recall that the Secretary-General, in his report to the General Assembly, indicates that the Millennium Declaration and the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit reaffirmed the central role of the Assembly in its capacity as the principal deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Madam President, we listened very carefully to the proposal you made this afternoon to hold meetings on issues related to gender and to dialogue among civilizations, and concerning the need to continue strengthening contacts with outside partners, including national and regional parliaments, civil society and the private sector. Honduras warmly welcomes those ideas. We also enthusiastically supported the proposal made by the Non-Aligned Movement to retain this item on our agenda.

We are certain that by strengthening the United Nations we will be able to realize the purposes and principles of the Charter, of which Honduras was a founding signatory. Our country will continue to participate in all discussions and negotiations aimed at strengthening our Organization.

Honduras, our country, hopes to see an Organization that is strong, united and deeply committed to today's world — one that hears the cries of humanity and can look forward to a day that is lit up by the smiles of the millions of human beings who long for a world of solidarity, peace, justice and, above all, equality.

Mr. Limeres (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we are once again considering the important subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly, and we have before us the report prepared by the Secretary-General. Argentina appreciates the information submitted to us, which will no doubt contribute to the careful evaluation of the outcome of the implementation of the mandates established in previous resolutions, including 58/126, 58/316, 59/313 and 60/286.

We wish to reiterate Argentina's priority commitment to the strengthening of the role of the General Assembly as the chief universal, deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, in particular through the reaffirmation of, and respect for, its competencies, as set out in the Charter.

We deem it essential to maintain and respect the mandates of each body as conferred by the Charter and the relevant resolutions, as well as to promote

transparency. In that regard, we welcome initiatives that strengthen the channels of communication between the Security Council and the General Assembly, including the practice of holding regular meetings among the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Likewise, we wish to stress the significant degree of transparency that we were able to achieve throughout the process of the selection process of the new Secretary-General, who will take his oath of office tomorrow — a process, which Argentina had the privilege of participating in and promoting. However, we agree that there is a need for greater efforts and a more coherent methodology on the part of the Security Council in order to move forward along this path.

Encouraging progress has been made concerning the working methods of the General Assembly, including its Main Committees. However, we must not forget that the objective of greater efficiency in the work of the Assembly will not be achieved through a purely methodological, formal approach. This is not about rationalizing the agenda or trying to achieve numerical efficiency; rather, it is about securing the political will required to implement all the mandates agreed upon by Member States through General Assembly resolutions, and ensuring that the Secretariat and the implementing agencies have sufficient resources at their disposal for that purpose. We must continue our efforts so as to finalize our work in those areas, in which there has been only partial implementation thus far.

Resolution 60/286 calls for consultations to decide on the re-establishment of an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, open to all Member States. Argentina supports the continued work of this mechanism in order to analyse the status of implementation of measures already adopted and to evaluate their effectiveness to enhance the functioning, authority and efficiency of the General Assembly, which is essential in order to continue to make solid progress towards that objective.

Madam President, you may count on the full support and cooperation of the Argentine delegation in your efforts to implement the plans that you have mentioned in this connection.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): As recalled in the report of the Secretary-General before us (A/61/483), the revitalization of the General Assembly has been examined by the Assembly at length and in depth in the course of the last 15 years. In addition to all the resolutions adopted to date, the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1) included the revitalization of the General Assembly in the framework of United Nations reform and called for the full and speedy implementation of measures to strengthen the role and authority of the Assembly. I wish to draw attention to some issues contained in resolution 60/286 and in the report of the Secretary-General which may provide the General Assembly with guidance for the work ahead.

The conceptual basis of the revitalization process is now consolidated. Brazil considers the present phase to be mainly one of implementation, the rhythm of which is influenced not only by the political motivations of Member States, but also by the pace of wider United Nations reform, which encompasses its institutions and practices, as well as by developing countries' determination to achieve more significant participation in the decision-making mechanisms.

The relationship among the principal organs of the United Nations is usually seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing. As a consequence, the interaction of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should amount to a mechanism of checks and balances. For the optimal functioning of that system, the main organs must perform their respective functions and exercise their powers in the manner provided for by the Charter. However, the system is not working as it should since none of the main organs works properly. The Security Council extrapolates its competences; the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council usually fall short of their mandates.

This interaction would be less confrontational and more fruitful if the Security Council were more transparent, inclusive, representative and accountable. A significant part of the legitimate complaints regarding the so-called encroachment by the Council upon the work of the General Assembly would be preventable should the Security Council be reformed in line with those objectives.

As has been evident in the debate on Security Council reform over the last two days, without a meaningful reform of the Council that encompasses enlargement in both categories of membership and a

profound revision of the Council's methods of work, any sort of mechanism to bridge the existing structural gaps between the main organs would merely be a halfway measure. We also expect that a strengthened Economic and Social Council should, as a part of the system, be able to fully play its Charter-based role.

At the same time, the General Assembly itself has a fundamental role in its own revitalization. It must make use to the full of the functions and powers provided to it by the Charter. The active role of the President of the General Assembly is essential in this regard, particularly in the promotion of debate on the outstanding issues and in strengthening the interaction of the principal organs.

The selection of the Secretary-General has recently received a great deal of attention, and properly so. The extensive discussions that preceded the adoption of resolution 60/286 brought to the fore the question of the role of the General Assembly in that regard. The interaction of candidates with groups of Member States can be considered unprecedented. As compared to previous processes, the Security Council was more transparent in the selection of the successor to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Nevertheless, a truly transparent and inclusive process goes far beyond a few measures, such as the issuing of letters of a generic nature by the President of the Council to the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The General Assembly should not lose the momentum created by this exercise, which should be considered an initial step towards building a truly transparent and inclusive process for the future.

The delegation of Brazil views the revitalization of the General Assembly as a work in progress. We willingly acknowledge the positive developments that have been achieved so far. Nevertheless, concrete results are still insufficient. For this reason, and taking into account the need to seize the political momentum injected into the situation by the Outcome Document, my delegation favours the continuation of the ad hoc working group, whose work should be focused on the monitoring of the implementation of the current framework and on providing proposals on how to move the process forward. A decision on the convening of the group should be taken without delay, in order to allow sufficient time for an adequate and in-depth consideration of the most important issues during the sixty-first session.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus welcomes the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483). The report contains much valuable information that helps us to evaluate impartially the results of our many years of work on strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the United Nations system. This report was even more needed in July and August at the final stage of negotiations on the text adopted as resolution 60/286.

In its statement, with which our delegation aligns itself, the Non-Aligned Movement made a point of mentioning the importance of timely and full implementation of resolutions of the General Assembly. If we are in fact firmly resolved to make the Assembly a more authoritative and influential organ heeded by the entire world, we need to make serious progress on the implementation of the decisions we adopt.

We believe that resolution 60/286, adopted in September, makes a significant contribution to the reform of the General Assembly and to enhancing its potential in terms of its influence on processes both within the United Nations and outside it. Specifically, the resolution provides for a mechanism to increase the Assembly's participation in the process of appointing the Secretary-General. We regret that this mechanism was not fully utilized in 2006. Paragraph 20 of resolution 60/286 was not implemented. That paragraph provides for the formal presentation of the candidates in a manner that allows sufficient time for interaction with Member States. Furthermore, the request for candidates to present their views to all Member States was not fully complied with.

Thorough preparatory work by Member States should be the basis of every Assembly resolution. On what work on the part of the General Assembly was which resolution 61/3, concerning the appointment of the Secretary-General, based? In our opinion, the work was carried out by the Security Council. We believe that it is important to take those shortcomings into account and to prevent the situation from recurring when the next Secretary-General is appointed.

In an age of globalization and the unprecedented interdependence of the processes of maintaining

international peace and security, promoting development and protecting human rights, the issue of sharing responsibilities among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is, inevitably, of great relevance.

Our delegation believes that there is no justification for the Security Council to consider issues that are within the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In our opinion, the Security Council should pay more attention to the settlement of existing and emerging armed conflicts and should refrain from considering situations that do not represent a threat to peace and security. The use of the Security Council by individual members for propaganda purposes can also undermine its authority. We also believe that the elaboration of normative documents is a task for the General Assembly, which should take into account Security Council practice in this regard.

There are, however, some grounds for optimism. We welcome the new layout of the front page of the daily *Journal of the United Nations* in accordance with paragraph 15 of resolution 60/286. Information about plenary meetings and other major General Assembly events now appears alongside information about Security Council meetings. Unfortunately, it took too long for us to take that logical decision, which has enabled us to enhance the visibility of the General Assembly without budgetary implications. Our satisfaction would be greater still if the meetings of the principal organs were listed in a completely rational manner — specifically, in alphabetical order. We hope that it will not take another year and require a separate resolution on the use of alphabetical order in United Nations practice before that happens.

We believe that the potential of the General Assembly's activities would be enhanced if they had greater thematic focus. We recall the positive role played by the one-week hearings that took place in the General Assembly on terrorism in October 2001 in the formation of the global counter-terrorist coalition and how the special meeting of the General Assembly in January 2005 helped to mobilize international support for the countries of South-East Asia affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami. The high-level dialogues on migration and on financing for development gave additional impetus to the development of international cooperation on those issues. That is only to be expected, as the Assembly provides a unique opportunity for specialists and experts to gather in New York and identify the most promising and forward-looking international practices and the most critical problems hampering international cooperation in specific fields. We support this trend in the work of the General Assembly and call for its further development.

One more issue deserves attention. Our delegation does not deny the importance of ensuring that the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly are concise. However, the limitations imposed on the length of reports often have a negative impact on the quality of the consideration of the issues. We have particular concerns regarding the preparation under such conditions of reports on global issues. It is no secret that every State and every group of States wishes to obtain information from a report about those aspects of a problem that most affect it, and we need to address that problem.

Together with our partners in the Non-Aligned Movement and all other interested delegations, we will continue to work on proposals and initiatives that can strengthen the role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/61/483). My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Latvia and of Yemen for their work as Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on this issue.

For Colombia, a founding Member of the United Nations, strengthening the General Assembly is a matter of fundamental importance. As the principal organ which has universal participation and transparent decision-making mechanisms, the General Assembly is the forum in which priority issues on the global agenda, including economic and social and development and peace and security, can be dealt with properly and effectively.

The process of revitalizing the General Assembly must not be just an exercise in efficiency and the reduction of the number of agenda items, but must have as its main purpose the strengthening of this body as a forum for decision-making on substantive issues. Revitalizing the General Assembly is the best way to make progress towards the objective of strengthening

the United Nations as the main institution of the multilateral system.

What do we have after 15 years of working to revitalize the Assembly? For many of us, the results are not very clear. Nevertheless, after examining the report and considering the efforts made by the most recent Co-Chairs, we can conclude that progress has been achieved, even if it has been slow. Such progress is reflected, for example, in the biennialization and triennialization of agenda items. On some issues there has been a reduction in the number of resolutions and a consolidation of reports. We have also observed that the Main Committees have done a better job of preparing their programmes of work. There is better dialogue between the President of the Assembly and Member States. Progress is being made in the area of thematic debates in plenary. And consultations took place — albeit speedily — between some of the candidates for the post of Secretary-General and regional groups.

Unfortunately, there is also some frustration with the process. The implementation of General Assembly resolutions has fallen short of initial expectations. The Security Council's reports to the General Assembly suffer from ambiguity and lack analysis and depth. The records of Assembly meetings take months to be published, while those of the Council are published the day after each meeting. In addition, we would like to know the outcome of the initiative to use optical scanners to facilitate the counting of secret votes in election processes. With that system, we could save valuable time in the work of the Assembly.

It is important to recognize that we continue to have a packed and sometimes overloaded agenda. It exceeds the capacity of small missions and makes it difficult for us to act more effectively. The proliferation of agenda items must be evaluated with an open mind and with sensitivity regarding issues of particular interest to Member States. This is not an easy task, but it is necessary to make substantive progress in order to enhance the Assembly's efficiency. In that connection, the outcome of the thematic debates in the Assembly could be of particular importance. The format and procedures of such debates must give priority to timely issues that will enrich the decision-making process and the results achieved by the Organization.

The Secretary-General's report and the consultations carried out during the previous session of the Assembly show the need for informal contacts between Member States and representatives of bodies and Committees that have not yet been able to implement the provisions of the resolutions on revitalizing the General Assembly. Such contacts would make it possible to identify recommendations and solutions aimed at making more effective progress in such implementation.

Yesterday, an extensive debate on Security Council reform concluded. The relationship between reform of the Council and revitalization of the Assembly became clear. A proper review of working methods must lead to strengthening the work of the General Assembly as the principal United Nations organ. The implementation of other reform initiatives — such as the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the review of mandates and management reform of the Secretariat — must be in conformity with the ultimate goal of revitalizing the General Assembly. Likewise, my delegation believes that future discussions on system-wide coherence must be guided by the objective of strengthening the Assembly for the benefit of Member States. The system will be coherent only to the extent that the Assembly's role is strengthened.

I wish to reaffirm my delegation's commitment to revitalization of the General Assembly, which is the most democratic and most representative body in the system of international relations. If the United Nations is to be able to face its current challenges effectively, the General Assembly must be able to fully exercise its role and its authority in the areas of its responsibility, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. That has been among Colombia's positions since 1945. The Assembly is the only organ capable of fulfilling the hopes of millions of people who long for a better, more stable and equitable world.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We believe that, overall, this has been a better year for the General Assembly than some of the previous ones. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and of the Human Rights Council, in particular, were significant achievements, and so was the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Assembly thus illustrated its ability to be a

policymaking body that is indeed at the heart of the Organization. It also became clear that we might be well advised to rethink the concept of consensus, which is almost religiously observed in our discussions, sometimes to the detriment of the quality of our decisions. Consensus is not necessarily the same things as unanimity, but rather numerically very strong support that reflects genuine political commitment. What we have known all along has also been confirmed: strong leadership is essential if the General Assembly is to achieve significant results.

While we can be proud of some of our achievements over the past year, we must, at the same time, address the deteriorating relationship between the Assembly and the Security Council. That relationship appears to be ever more troubled and has had a negative impact on numerous discussions, including those on management reform. We are concerned that many view the relationship as antagonistic instead of complementary. We believe that a strong Assembly and a strong Council can coexist and can work to each other's benefit, and that both bodies must have a genuine interest in having a functional and effective counterpart.

Much has been said about the blurred lines of competence between the two organs and about the migration of topics from the Assembly to the Council. We share those concerns, but we do not believe that blaming the Council is the solution to this unwelcome trend. Quite to the contrary, we believe that the Assembly has to assert its authority in the areas where it has competence under the Charter, not only by insisting on its competence, but also by producing clear results that justify the competence attributed to it.

As a member of the group known as the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — we naturally see the working methods of the Security Council as a case in point regarding the relationship between the two organs. It is quite clear that the Assembly has the mandate, both legally and politically, to make recommendations on the way in which the Council conducts its business. Such recommendations were contained in the draft resolution (A/60/L.49) that the S-5 submitted in March 2006. More than anything else, that text was aimed at creating a dialogue between the two organs on a topic that is of obvious interest and relevance to the membership as a whole.

In hindsight, we believe that we have partly succeeded, in that our text had a clear impact on the discussions in the Council itself. At the same time, the dialogue was not quite what we had in mind, because most of it consisted of things that were left unspoken. We hope that it will be possible to further develop this dialogue and to make it mutually beneficial and constructive. We will follow with great attention the implementation of the measures decided on by the Council itself, suggest further measures for consideration and seek formal and informal ways to engage the Council on this subject. Given the continued inaction on the issue of enlargement of the Council, steady progress and an ongoing process on the issue of working methods — which is of particular importance to small countries — are all the more important.

We have mixed feelings concerning the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. On the one hand, we strongly believe that an Assembly that is fully capable of fulfilling the tasks assigned to it by the Charter is essential for a sound institutional balance within the Organization. On the other hand, we do not get the impression that talking about revitalization brings us much closer to that goal.

Indeed, the report before us today (A/61/483) makes for somewhat ironic reading. In paragraph 9, reference is made to the annual report of the Security Council and the decision of the Assembly that the report should be considered "through substantive and interactive debates". We just finished our debate on the report yesterday evening. A substantive discussion was impossible, of course, given the date of the report's submission. There was nothing interactive about the debate either. We would welcome such an interactive debate, even if it were convened at a later stage during the session.

Paragraph 14 of the report addresses the selection of the Secretary-General. We wholeheartedly welcome His Excellency Ban Ki-moon as the new Secretary-General and look forward to his being sworn in tomorrow in this Hall. Nevertheless, the process leading to his selection had little to do with the measures set out in paragraph 14 of the report before the Assembly.

Rather sadly, the discussions on revitalization confirm some of the prejudices of the wider public against the United Nations. A good part of the report is

dedicated to the problem of non-implementation, which is, indeed, an urgent problem. But it becomes clear that non-implementation starts with the very decisions on revitalization itself. Instead of engaging in these repetitive and at times absurdly circular discussions, we would be better advised to seize the General Assembly of issues of real relevance and to ensure that decisions are taken that have a real impact on the problems that they purport to address.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 110.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.